

## Seeing God's Hand in Hardship, Part 3 - Acts 28:4 – October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2010

- This is part three of a series we began several weeks ago in Acts chapter twenty eight titled; "Seeing God's Hand in Hardship."
- The Apostle Paul has just been shipwrecked again, and this time finds himself on the Island of Malta, as a prisoner on his way to Rome.
- It's important to understand that this shipwreck on this Island was a divine detour that was orchestrated by the hand of God Himself.

- The chapter that we have before us - can be a lesson to us, in how it is that we can learn to see God's hand in those shipwrecks of life.
- Often times, in the midst of our hardship, God will allow us to see His fingerprints on those difficult circumstances in the trials we face.
- We saw the first one in verse one, where, after swimming to shore and clinging to life in the midst of this storm, they finally reach land.

### 1. Refuge (Verse 1)

- Here, we saw that God's hand came by way of refuge as they land on the island of Malta, (Refuge), which they didn't recognize at first.
- There are those times when God moves His mighty hand on our behalf, bringing us to our Malta in order to provide us a place of refuge.

### 2. Kindness (Verse 2)

- The second way that we can see God's hand in our hardship was in verse two. It's when we're the recipients of "unusual kindness."
- Were told that it's cold and raining, so the Barbarian's show unusual kindness by building a fire for them, and are welcoming to them.

### 3. Strength (Verse 3a)

- The third way that we can discover God's hand in our hardship was found in the first part of verse three; it's His supernatural strength.
- Even though Paul is as tired and exhausted as everyone else, he has the strength to gather a pile of brushwood and put it on the fire.

### 4. Opportunity (Verse 3b)

- That brought us to the fourth way we discover God's hand in our hardship. It comes in the form of a divinely appointed opportunity.
- The opportunity is presented vis-à-vis a snake that's driven out from the heat of the fire then fastens itself on the Apostle Paul's hand.
- As we'll see next God will use this as an opportunity to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to these Barbarian's here on the Island of Malta.

### 5. Tragedy (Verse 4)

4 When the islanders saw the snake hanging from his hand, they said to each other, "This man must be a murderer; for though he escaped from the sea, Justice has not allowed him to live."

- The fifth way we may see God's hand in our hardship, and I know this might jam some gears, but it may come when tragedy strikes.
- Let me hasten to say that God didn't make this snake strike Paul, rather, He allowed Satan to make this snake strike the Apostle Paul.
- In other words, God's hand is in the hardship of life when tragedy strikes because it will play a part in His plan according to His purpose.
- v4 Luke tells us that when the islanders saw the snake hanging from his hand, they tell each other that it's because he's a murderer.

- It's vital we know how these locals dealt with tragedy like this because to them, this was the Greek goddess of Justice on Paul's life.
- If the truth be known, not much has changed in our day. People see tragedy through the lens of a God Who is pouring out His wrath.

"So readily do we interpret every accident into a judgment, but such a habit is cruelly unjust to good men. Such an instance as this ought to cure us of crying out; 'What a judgment!' whenever sudden calamities fall on man. God's judgments are reserved for another world, and are rarely seen in this life."

Charles Spurgeon

- Now, while it is true that the Judgment of God is coming on mankind, this is most certainly not God's judgment on the Apostle Paul.
- I like what one commentator said when he wrote; "God didn't preserve Paul from the storm just to let him perish by the snake."
- Perhaps you'll indulge me for just a moment before we move on to verse five, because I see this as a very important life changing truth.

- We do err when we're so quick to see the tragedy's of life as God punishing us, instead of seeing the hand of God bringing good to us.
- God is going to take this bad, and make this good because His hand - is in this snake fastening itself to the Apostle Paul's hand.
- I shouldn't see the tragedy as God is doing this "to" me, rather, I should see His hand in it doing this "for" me "in" me, and "through" me.

**2 Corinthians 1:3-7** 3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. 5 For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows. 6 If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. 7 And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort. NIV